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ABSTRACT

This booklet, a public relations publication of Aetna Life & Casualty, describes Aetna's partnership program with schools, community groups, and other businesses to help disadvantaged youth develop employability skills. The issue of closing the employability gap is briefly addressed, and Aetna's interest and role in developing a pool of qualified job applicants is discussed. Aetna's responsibility to coordinate the "Stepping Up" support team is then explained. The three basic resources that the schools, community groups, and other businesses can use to bridge the employability gap are discussed: dollars through local grant-making; volunteer participation; and employment and training in various businesses. The three existing education and employment programs that Aetna is expanding as part of "stepping up" are described. They are Saturday Academy, which provides educational enrichment and motivation for inner-city seventh graders; Students at Work, which keeps at-risk high school students from dropping out; and Office Futures, which provides intensive office skills training and job placement for unemployed adults. (YLB)

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A Partnership for Jobs in the 1990's

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Special Priority of Ætna Life & Casualty

Dear Ætna Colleague:

American business faces a fundamental problem: finding enough trained people to fill jobs, now and in the future. The proportion of young people who lack the education and skills to enter the work force is growing. The result is an employability gap that has serious implications for society, since millions of young people without job skills are forced into unemployment and dependency on government programs.

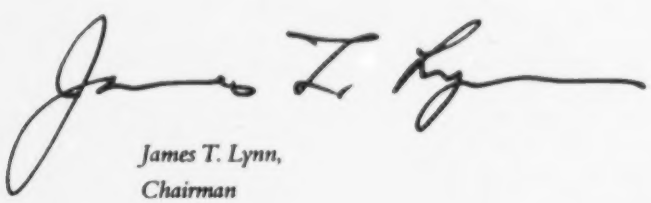
The "Stepping Up" program is our partnership with schools, community groups and other businesses committed to helping disadvantaged young people develop into the competent employees that businesses need. It is Ætna's way of helping bridge the gap between the working world and young people who want jobs but don't have the skills to obtain them.

Ætna cannot close the employability gap alone, but we can contribute our resources and knowledge to the effort. "Stepping Up" will be managed by a team of representatives from both operating and staff divisions, and it will use Ætna's expertise to help young people obtain the education and skills they need to succeed in the workplace.

Ætna has a tradition of working with others to solve community problems, and "Stepping Up" is an outgrowth of that tradition. By working with others who have a stake in the issue, we can help meet our need for qualified employees. And "Stepping Up" is more than just good business; it is a response to a serious social and economic problem that affects all of us.

This booklet describes "Stepping Up". The program's success depends on the participation of Ætna people and their communities. We want and need your help. Please join us in this effort. It has been designated a special priority because the employability problem is one which affects the vitality of both American business and our country.

Sincerely,



James T. Lynn,
Chairman

THE ISSUE

Throughout our nation's history, education has been the principal means for the disadvantaged to achieve economic and social self-sufficiency. But today, when education is a more essential stepping stone than ever before, nearly 25 percent of our young people are dropping out of school, and in many large cities the dropout rate is as high as 50 percent. Among students who do graduate, many are without the skills to obtain jobs that offer economic independence or any hope for career advancement.

The causes of this situation are complex, but its effects on American society are tragically evident. Without job skills, millions of young people fall into a cycle of unemployment, poverty and hopelessness. And the evidence is convincing that their children are often doomed to repeat the cycle.

A few facts illustrate the extent of the problem and its effect on American business:

- In 1985, about one in four 18- to 19-year olds failed to finish high school. Among Hispanics, more than half did not graduate. Among blacks, more than a third failed to graduate. Yet, by the year 2000, minorities will comprise one-third of the potential entrants to the labor force.
- By 1990, an estimated three out of four jobs will require some education or training beyond high school.
- By the year 2000, the number of young people in the work force will be same as in 1973, but the need for entry level workers will have doubled.

As alarming as the problem is, it is one that must – and can – be overcome. Ætna believes that the business community can help our schools prepare young people to be valuable, productive workers and citizens. By combining the special skills of business, community groups, schools and others who have a stake in this issue, the employability gap can be closed.

WHY ÆTNA?

Ætna has a tradition of involvement in societal issues that affect our business. For more than a decade, through grant-making and other cooperative efforts, we've actively supported job-skills programs for the economically disadvantaged.

Today there is a pressing business concern as well. As the nation's largest investor-owned insurance and financial services organization, Ætna has an ongoing need for well-trained people to fill a variety of jobs as our markets grow.

"Stepping Up" provides an opportunity to expand and diversify the pool of qualified job applicants Ætna will need in the years ahead. And because the program depends on employee participation, it also gives our managers and employees an opportunity to develop leadership skills beyond their everyday duties – and to make a difference in the lives of others.

But "Stepping Up" involves more than just Ætna. To be effective, the program will require the cooperation of many companies, community organizations, teachers and civic groups – all working together to help solve a critical social and business problem.

Many young people entering the job market lack the skills to perform effectively. Without intervention, this will only get worse...

"STEPPING UP"

"Stepping Up" is Ætna's effort to bridge the employability skills gap – the gap between young people who lack education and work experience and businesses that urgently need skilled employees.

Through a combination of national and local grantmaking, employee volunteerism, training programs and job opportunities, Ætna will use the range of its resources and expertise to help people develop the skills they need to get jobs and, more importantly, launch careers.

We will focus our efforts on those who, without intervention, are unlikely to succeed in school and the working world. "Stepping Up" does not target above-average achievers; nor will it reach the lowest-skilled, most disadvantaged, who need more intensive, long-term assistance than we can provide. The success of "Stepping Up" will be measured by how prepared its student participants are to finish their education and to work at Ætna and other companies after completing the program.

Ætna's Corporate Public Involvement department will coordinate the "Stepping Up" support team, which consists of representatives from each insurance division's human resource department, Corporate Human Resources and other corporate areas with expertise in public policy issues and corporate affairs.

But the real success of "Stepping Up" will depend on the leadership and participation you and others within your community bring to the effort. There are a variety of ways you can

help to address the employability gap, and three basic resources you can use: dollars, people, and jobs.

Dollars:

Local

Grantmaking

Our FOCUS grant program operates in 42 field office cities where Ætna managers assess the needs of their communities and recommend Ætna Life & Casualty Foundation grants. By targeting FOCUS dollars to education and job-skills training, Ætna field offices can help their communities close the employability skills gap. Ætna offices in Elmira, N.Y.; Fall River, Mass.; Middletown and Windsor, Conn.; have similar, locally-managed grant programs, and Corporate Public Involvement manages the Hartford grant program.

Grants have been made to fund basic skills improvement programs in urban public schools, provide in-service teacher training, bring needed counseling and social service programs to students, and provide curriculum enrichment to disadvantaged school districts.

Local grants can support tutorial programs for students who are working below grade level or school-to-work transition programs to give high school students the job-hunting and job-keeping skills they need to succeed in the work force.

Employees also can apply for Dollars for Doers grants of up to $500 to meet special needs of organizations for which they volunteer. Currently, youth development programs like Junior Achievement are the largest recipients of Dollars for Doers support.

People:

Volunteer

Participation

Ætna's long-standing encouragement of employee volunteerism reflects our belief that hands-on personal involvement often makes an even greater contribution than dollars. As part of "Stepping Up" we're encouraging employees to work with disadvantaged young people who need positive role models, and to help them develop the skills and attitudes they need to complete their education and achieve personal success.

Employees can volunteer with organizations like the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and the Big Brother and Big Sister programs. There are tutoring programs in a variety of subjects where Ætna people have special expertise, and programs like Junior Achievement, which gives middle and high school students exposure to the business world. In each case, these programs have a constant need for adult volunteers.

Service on local school boards, private industry councils that operate training programs, or boards of non-profit groups like the United Way also are ways in which individuals can make a difference in how their communities tackle the employability gap.

Jobs:

Ætna Employment and Training

Every office can use the Ætna workplace as a tool for helping young people prepare for employment. Activities can be as simple as an office tour for a school class–or as formal as a job training partnership.

Your efforts can result in a larger, more diverse pool of qualified job applicants who have a favorable attitude toward Ætna.

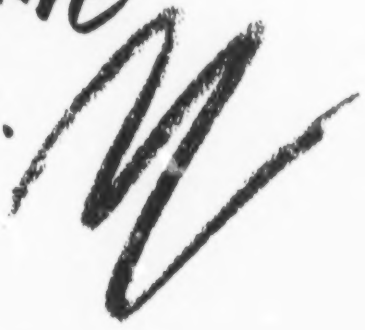
Offices can offer "job shadowing," where a student follows an employee through typical daily activities – or brief non-paid internships to give students exposure to the workplace while giving Ætna supervisors the opportunity to assess their potential for future employment.

More intensive work experience can be offered through Ætna's after-school or summer job programs in cooperation with local high schools. And schools, community colleges and community organizations welcome the opportunity to establish more formal partnerships to providing office skills training.

These are only a few examples of how your office can initiate its own Stepping Up activities. The range of possibilities – for office-wide special projects, for activities by small groups of employees, or for individual action – is limited only by your imagination and the resources you are willing to commit.

In many cases, there are organizations within your community already working on the problem which would welcome your involvement. The Stepping Up team can offer additional suggestions, plus provide information about existing programs in your area. (The last section of this brochure includes a reply card to request more information.)

You can increase the number of candidates available for AETNA jobs in the future by helping young people prepare for productive lives.



MODEL PROGRAMS

As part of "Stepping Up" Ætna is expanding three existing education and employment programs. Each one involves a partnership with local schools and community organizations and each has been fully tested to assure positive results:

- Saturday Academy – Providing educational enrichment and motivation for inner-city seventh graders;
- Students at Work – Keeping at-risk high school students from dropping out before graduation; and,
- Office Futures – Providing intensive office skills training and job placement for unemployed adults.

By 1990, we plan to have these programs in place in more than 25 cities across the nation, with more than 800 participants each year. If you'd like to have your office considered as a future site, send in the reply card at the back of this brochure. The Stepping Up team can provide you with detailed information on how the programs work, the level of office involvement needed, and the extent of financial and other support it can provide.

SATURDAY ACADEMY

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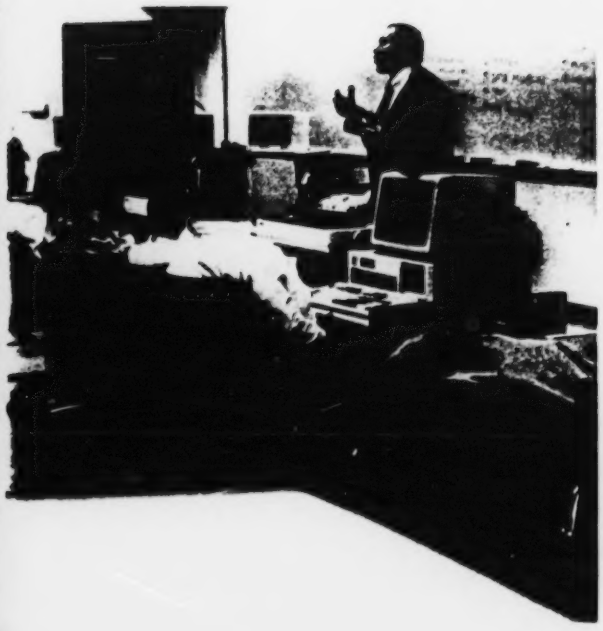
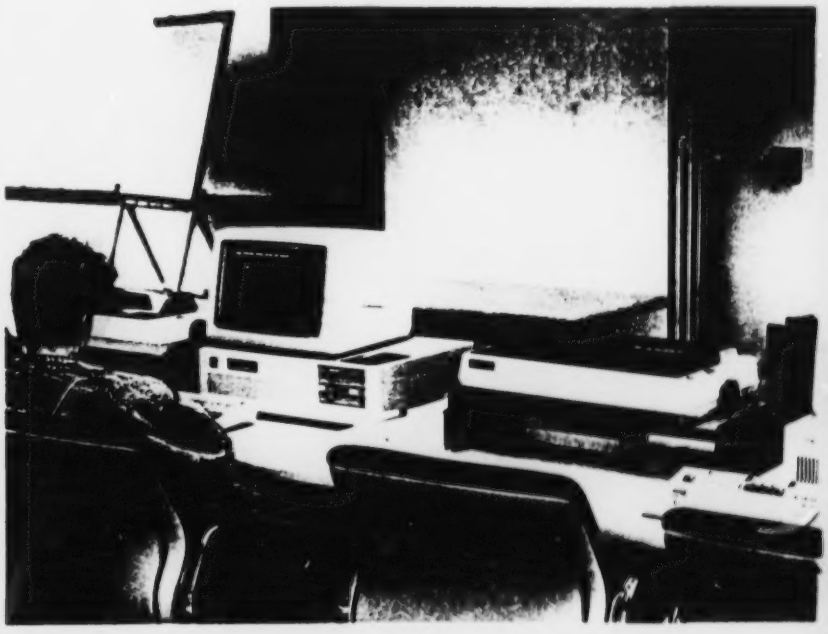
Saturday Academy was developed in 1984 by the Ætna Institute for Corporate Education in a joint effort with the Hartford Board of Education. It is an enrichment program for seventh graders, designed to get children excited about learning and to make them aware of the payoffs of education before they start down the road to dropping out. More than 400 children have already been helped by the Saturday Academy program in Hartford.

During the program, instruction in math, science, computers and communications skills builds on the regular school curriculum. Students take a "field trip" to an Ætna department to see how what they learn in school is put to use in the workplace. A unique aspect of Saturday Academy is participation by a parent or adult relative, both in regular sessions and in special workshops on how to help their children succeed.

Washington, D.C., is the first field site targeted for a Saturday Academy, and other locations will be added in 1989 and beyond.





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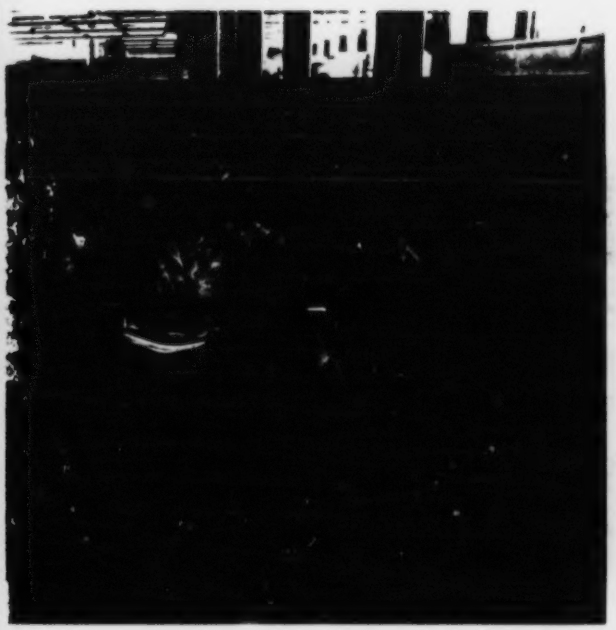
STUDENTS AT WORK

Students at Work, a work/study incentive program for high school juniors and seniors, was the brainchild of Bob Roberts, formerly general manager of PFSD's Houston office and now a PFSD regional vice president in Hartford.

It may be unlike any other program in the country in that it deliberately seeks out "at-risk" students – potential dropouts who are usually ineligible for work/study opportunities. Students attend school for part of the day and then participate in a work and training program which includes assignments in each field office department. As long as they maintain passing grades in school and meet Ætna's attendance and performance guidelines, students are assured of a summer job after their junior year. And if they stick with the program and stay in school, the payoff is the *guarantee* of full-time jobs with Ætna when they graduate.

The Houston program began in the fall of 1986 and has been enormously successful. New programs are already under way in Dallas, Philadelphia, Atlanta and Sacramento, and new sites will be added in 1989 and beyond.

OFFICE FUTURES



Office Futures is an intensive, six-month office skills training program aimed at unemployed or under-employed adults, typically welfare parents. The program began in 1981 when Ætna established a partnership with the community-based National Puerto Rican Forum in Hartford.

Office Futures assists those who want to work but lack formal education or work experience. The community-based partner provides remedial training in English and math, keyboard and office skills, as well as job-readiness training. Ætna provides paid internships and other assistance, including grants and curriculum assistance.

To date, the program has produced more than 200 graduates who have more than met Ætna's entry-level requirements. In fact, there has been keen competition from other companies to hire Office Futures graduates.

If your Field office would like to sponsor the Office Futures program in its community in 1989, Corporate Public Involvement would like to hear from you.

THE NEXT STEP

No matter how you choose to become involved in Ætna's efforts at "Stepping Up," the program's greatest success will come when it expands to include as many community groups and businesses as possible–maximizing both financial and human resources–by tapping the full range of volunteer and corporate services available in your community.

We need your help to get the initial programs started and also to create linkages with other groups, so that "Stepping Up" becomes a broad-based community effort.

If you would like more specific information on how you and your office can "Step Up," either as a future site for one of the three model programs or by using your own resourcefulness and creativity to initiate local programs, complete the response card at the back of this brochure and send it to Gail Promboin, Assistant Vice President, Corporate Public Involvement (A105 at the Home Office).

We'll provide you with more detailed information on Ætna's model programs and other ideas for action, as well as *customized information on organizations in your area* that are working to reduce the employability skills gap.

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